



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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DNR STILL PURSUING RUSSIAN HOGS

SIDNEY – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is actively trying to eradicate the Russian wild hog population in Fremont County. DNR wildlife biologists are using traps to catch the hogs. One was captured over the weekend.

Area wildlife biologist Carl Priebe said he believes the Russian wild hog population can be eradicated, but advised any would be hunters should stay away. Although well intentioned, actively hunting these nuisance animals will only make them harder to catch and for every animal shot, a dozen or more will be educated on how to avoid people, Priebe said.

The DNR is working closely with landowners in the area and has closed the Green Hollow Wildlife Area, north of Thurman, to hog hunting. "Hunting is not an effective tool," he said. "These animals are a destructive force on our landscape, not a species of recreation."

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KELLERTON WILDLIFE AREA PROVIDES UNIQUE GLIMPSE INTO IOWA'S PAST

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

KELLERTON--It is still a full hour before sunrise when the hilltop booming ground stirs to life. And, of course, it's still too dark to see when the first arrivals begin to sail in from nearby roosting areas. We know they're here, however, for as soon as the birds touch down the daily calling, and the fighting begins.

I'm spending this drizzly predawn with a half dozen outdoor enthusiasts, mainly from central and southern Iowa, and we've gathered at The Kellerton Grasslands Bird Conservation Area (BCA). Ranking as one of Iowa's most unique natural treasures, the 1,140-acre Kellerton BCA is a place where Iowans can literally view, as well as hear, a page from our history.

As daylight approaches, Micah Lee is the first of our group to actually spot a bird.

"Here comes one," Lee whispers. Following his gaze, I finally make out the black silhouette as it glides in for a landing.

Immediately, the big cock prairie chicken begins his ritual. It's like nothing you've ever seen. The bird bows and then, in a cadence too rapid to follow, begins to stomp both feet in blurring succession. The result is an audible tattoo that becomes a prolonged drum roll. The force of the action causes the chicken to spin like a feathered wind-up toy.

But the best is yet to come. With feet still pounding, the bird suddenly bows again and begins to pump air into its set of huge, bright orange neck sacs. It is not until the chicken's neck is fully inflated, that the prairie song begins.

Eerie, mournful, and haunting -- the booming call of the greater prairie chicken is like no other. The resonate hollow sound is completely indescribable. Once heard, it is never forgotten and will forever play in your mind.

The chicken's booming did not go unnoticed by some of the earlier arrivals. One of the nearby cock birds suddenly rushed the intruder. Beak to beak, the chickens squared off and were soon sparring. Within seconds the confrontation had escalated to where both birds were now leaping into the air and lashing at each other with beak, wing, and foot. The intruder gave in and retreated to the perimeter of the booming ground.

"Only the dominant males area allowed to occupy the center of the lek [booming

ground]. That's where the females will come," said Lee, who is also a DNR wildlife technician stationed at the Mount Ayr Wildlife Unit.

"This is such a unique opportunity," Lee added.

"Here is a public area where anyone can come and be virtually guaranteed of seeing wild prairie chickens on a spring booming ground. We're very fortunate to have this."

On Saturday, April 16, Lee is coordinating the Kellerton Area's Second Annual Prairie Chicken Day. The event begins at the area's viewing stand, located 2 miles west of Kellerton on Highway 2 and one mile south on 300th Ave.

Coffee, donuts, good conversation, and spotting scopes will be available on site. DNR wildlife personnel will offer interpretation of the prairie chicken's unusual spring ritual.

Viewing will continue until birds leave the booming grounds -- usually by 9:30. Following that, the public is welcome to view other grasslands bird life or assist area management biologists as they plant native prairie wild flowers.

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NORTH IOWA HUNTER BAGS HIS BIRD DURING FIRST EVER YOUTH TURKEY SEASON

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

FERTILE--For twelve-year-old, Michael Kozisek, this year's spring turkey hunting season is already over. Kozisek bagged his gobbler last Friday during his first ever turkey hunt which took place on the first morning of Iowa's first ever, 3-day Special Youth Hunt.

You've probably noticed that there were a lot of *firsts* in that previous sentence. For Kozisek, it was a day he'll never forget.

In order to participate in the newest Youth Hunting Season, you need to be an Iowa resident between 12 and 16 years of age. You also need to have successfully completed a Hunter Safety Course, and hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult. Kozisek's hunt took place in an oak timber near the Winnebago River. He was accompanied by Clear Lake Police Chief Dan Jackson.

"We got out there while it was still dark, and the turkeys started gobbling," said Kozisek.

"I think we heard about five or six different birds. I didn't see the turkey I shot for

a long time. Then I saw something that looked big and black. Then I saw his red and white head. And then I shot. I was pretty excited," said Kozisek.

Chief Jackson appeared to be excited as well.

"It was really something," said Jackson. "We called to that bird for over an hour. He was gobbling like crazy, but we couldn't ever see him. The tom finally got close enough to see our decoy. He fanned out and just came strutting in. He was in the sunlight, and the plumage was just gorgeous."

"I was just as pumped as he [Jason] was," said Jackson. "I tried to run the video camera, but I just couldn't do it. I was just too excited."

With the adult tom turkey strutting at a mere 20 paces, Kozisek squeezed the trigger. One clean shot with the Mossberg 20 gauge was all it took. The gobbler weighed 21 pounds and sported a 10-inch beard.

###

DNR NETTING EFFORT FILLS STATE WALLEYE HATCHERY

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

DES MOINES--For DNR hatchery workers, the most important item on this spring's work schedule has already come and gone. Nets have been set, spawning walleyes captured, and millions of eggs collected.

Those spawning, adult walleyes -- minus their eggs, of course -- have already been returned to their home waters. All those precious eggs, however, have stayed behind. They are now under the watchful care of biologists located at the Rathbun and Spirit Lake State Fish Hatcheries.

According to DNR Fish Culture Supervisor Mike Mason, those incubating eggs should begin hatching into millions of tiny walleye fry within the next two weeks. Many of those future lunkers will be immediately distributed to public waters across the state. The remainder of those fry will stay a bit longer to inhabit the protected environment of DNR nursery lakes until June when they will be stocked as 2 to 3-inch fingerlings. Some of those 2 to 3-inchers will remain until early this fall and stocked as 6 to 8-inch fingerlings.

"The weather and water temperatures were unseasonably warm this year," said Mason. "The conditions were good and fish came quickly. Statewide, I think we'll be able to put up about 1,000 quarts of [walleye] eggs which fills the hatchery. Overall, the spawning run has been at least average, and should provide all the fish we need to meet statewide requests."

Spawning walleyes were collected at Lake Rathbun, Spirit Lake, Storm Lake, and Clear Lake. Clear Lake was this year's "undisputed brood fish hot spot." Nearly half of the state's total egg collection came from this 3,600-acre natural lake.

"It was really an incredible spring at Clear Lake," says DNR [North Iowa] district fisheries biologist, Jim Wahl. "We handled nearly 1,500 walleyes here and collected around 400 quarts [50 million] eggs during seven nights of netting.

"This year, some of the biggest female walleyes ran up to 28 and 29 inches in length," said Wahl. "However, the majority of our brood fish were in the 22 to 23-inch range and weighed around four pounds. There's a good variety of fish, and those walleyes are in the prime of their life. I'm excited because it spells very good news for the long term future of our hatchery operations here at Clear Lake."

"The satellite egg collection operations located at Clear Lake and Storm Lake are really providing a benefit to anglers across the entire state," said Mason. "Without them it would be extremely difficult to fill the hatcheries."

###

DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 19 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations covering deer hunting, fall wild turkey hunting, and waterfowl seasons. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on April 19, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

"This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations," said Dale Garner, chief of the DNR's wildlife bureau. "We will go over the proposed regulations and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics."

The proposed changes include increasing the number of antlerless deer only permits, establishes the fall 2005, spring 2006 hunting seasons and bag limits, proposes a statewide two day September Canada goose season, and increases the spring and fall opportunities for turkey hunters.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to help with the meeting.

ICN Locations:

Ames

Iowa State University 7, Scheman Building, Iowa State Center, Room 160

Bettendorf	Scott Community College, 500 Belmont Road, Room 210
Burlington	Burlington High School, 421 Terrace Dr.
Calmar	Northeast Iowa Community College, Dairy Education Center, 1527 Hwy. 150 South, Room 114
Cedar Falls	University of Northern Iowa 8, Lang Hall, Room 385
Cedar Rapids	Kirkwood Community College 2, 6301 Kirkwood Blvd. SW, Room 203B, Linn Hall 203B
Chariton	Chariton High School, 501 N. Grand, Room 116
Creston	Green Valley Area Education Agency 14, 1405 N. Lincoln, Turner Room
Council Bluffs	Iowa Western Community College 1, 2700 College Road, Looft Hall
Dubuque	Keystone Area Education Agency 1, 2310 Chaney Road, Room 2
Fort Dodge	Fort Dodge High School, 819 N 25 th St., Room 12
Iowa City	Iowa City Public Library, 123 South Linn St., Meeting Room D
Marshalltown	Iowa Valley Community College District, 13702 South Center St., Continuing Education Center, Room 806
Mason City	North Iowa Area Community College 3, 500 College Dr., Careers Building, Room 129
Ottumwa	Ottumwa High School, 501 E. 2 nd , Voc. Tech. Bldg., Room 157
Sioux City	Western Iowa Tech Community College 2, 4647 Stone Ave., Building A, Room D201
Spencer	Spencer National Guard Armory, 11 East 23 rd Street
West Des Moines	Valley High School, 1140 35 th St., Room 118

For more information, contact Garner at 515-281-6156 or Terry Little at 515-281-8660.

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

PRAIRIE CITY – The public is invited to discuss the potential designation of the region that includes the Chichaqua Wildlife Area and Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge as a Bird Conservation Area (BCA) at a meeting April 21. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Prairie Learning Center, located about two miles south of Prairie City on the paved refuge entry road.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is working with other partners to establish Bird Conservation Areas and embrace the concept of all-bird conservation.

“Recent research suggests that sustainable bird populations require conservation efforts at a much broader level than has been used in the past,” said Bruce Ehresman, DNR wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Diversity Program. “The partnership between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners is key to

creating large expanses of bird habitat and reversing the trend of dwindling bird populations.”

The concept of Bird Conservation Areas is relatively new for Iowa, and only six such areas now exist. To create a seventh BCA, both the Polk County Conservation Board and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are cooperating with the Iowa DNR to make the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grassland Bird Conservation Area a reality. Each BCA consists of core protected land surrounded by large expanses of well-managed bird habitat, most of which is privately owned. Landowners who would like to assist with bird conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance, and there will be no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner.

Designating a Bird Conservation Area helps draw attention to the needs of birds that are in trouble, and it allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds. Declining species, such as Short-eared Owl, Northern Harrier, and Henslow’s and Grasshopper sparrows, will benefit from the designation of the Chichaqua-Neal Smith Grassland Bird Conservation Area.

Establishing BCAs in Iowa can also provide an economic boost for the state. While a multitude of bird species are declining, bird watching is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America, with an estimated 70 to 80 million participants in the United States. According to a recent U.S Fish and Wildlife Survey, wildlife watchers in Iowa, alone, now spend up to \$188 million each year in pursuit of this hobby.

“The bottom line of this BCA effort is to keep the landscape alive with the sights and songs of birds for generations to come,” said Doug Harr, Wildlife Diversity Program coordinator for the DNR.

For more information, contact Ehresman at 515-432-2823 or Harr at 515-281-4815.

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BOAT REGISTRATIONS DUE BY APRIL 30

DES MOINES – Boat and personal watercraft owners are required to renew the registration of their vessels by April 30. Registration fees vary depending on the size of the vessel and are paid to the county recorder in the county where the owner resides. Failure to display current registration is a simple misdemeanor.

Iowa’s recreational boating activities continue to grow each year. Registration fees are used to support Iowa’s boating enforcement and safety program.

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GO NATIVE WHEN PLANTING TREES AND SHRUBS

AMES - Successful tree and shrub plantings provide a multitude of environmental benefits. These benefits include increased food and cover for wildlife, decreased wind and water erosion, improved water quality, enhanced natural beauty, increased recreational opportunities, and potential financial gain through the production of wood fiber. However, for a planting to provide any of these benefits it must be successful.

“Utilizing Iowa adapted and Iowa grown tree and shrub seedlings is one simple way to improve your chances for a successful planting project,” said Paul Tauke, supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau. “Even though a tree or shrub species is native to Iowa it does not mean that all plants of that species are suited for Iowa’s climate.”

Bur oak, for example, has a native range stretching from southern Texas to southern Canada. Even though it is native to Iowa, it would be a poor practice to plant a bur oak seedling from Texas or even central Missouri in Iowa. Seedlings from southern climates have adapted over many years to a warmer climate and a longer growing season.

“They simply will not tolerate our weather and site conditions as well as our naturally adapted Iowa bur oaks,” Tauke said. As a result they will be stressed and more likely to develop insect, disease and mortality problems. Generally, the problems associated with planting seedling stock from southern seed sources may not be apparent for as many as 15 to 20 years.

The best way to insure that plant material is from an Iowa adapted seed source is to purchase seedlings from Iowa Nurseries. For a list of nurseries providing Iowa grown plant material log on to www.iowatreeplanting.com or contact Forestry Supervisor Paul Tauke at paul.tauke@dnr.state.ia.us or at 515/242-6898.

###

TWO MORE PRAIRIE RESCUES ANNOUNCED FOR APRIL 16

DES MOINES – Iowans have two more chances to help save the prairie on April 16. Rescues in Crawford County and in central Dallas County have been added to eight other events already scheduled.

The two additional rescues will take place at:

- King Cemetery: Volunteers should meet at 10 a.m. at the cemetery to remove brush and non-native trees. They may also help replace 1,180 feet of fence. This cemetery was created in 1859, when settler George Cadwell King was

buried atop a hill.

- Voas Conservation Area: Volunteers should meet at 9 a.m. at the Voas parking lot, located near Minburn. Participants will join in a public prairie burn from 9 to 11 a.m. From noon until 3 p.m., volunteers will help remove invasive species.

The sixth annual Iowa Statewide Prairie Rescue – a series of volunteer efforts to save Iowa’s prairie habitat – includes these and other events set to occur across the state throughout April and May. Volunteers help remove invasive woody species, plant native grasses and flowers, and restore and preserve Iowa’s natural heritage in other ways.

Directions to these and all other Prairie Rescue 2005 events are available at www.inhf.org/prairierescue2005.html.

For more information about each event, contact the following people:

- **King Cemetery: GLENN POLLOCK at (402) 571-6230.**
- **Voas Conservation Area: CHRIS ADKINS at (515) 465-3577 or at dallascocons@iowatelecom.net.**

For more information about Statewide Prairie Rescue 2005 contact KATIE KEMP at (515) 281-3134 or Katie.Kemp@dnr.state.ia.us or CATHY ENGSTROM at (515) 288-1846 or at cengstrom@inhf.org.

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PRAIRIE RESCUE 2005 COMES TO SEVEN SITES APRIL 23, 24

DES MOINES – Iowa volunteers will return to their roots next weekend when seven prairie rescue events occur across the state.

The sixth annual Iowa Statewide Prairie Rescue – a series of volunteer efforts to save Iowa’s prairie habitat – will hold events on April 23 and 24. Volunteers will remove invasive woody species, plant native grasses and flowers, and help restore and preserve Iowa’s natural heritage in other ways.

The April 23 events include rescues at:

- Ames High Prairie State Preserve: Volunteers should meet at 9 a.m. outside the Ames High School (1921 Ames High Drive, Ames) near the “Richard M. Pohl Memorial Preserve” sign.
- Bobwhite State Park: Volunteers should meet at 9 a.m. at a parking area near the south entrance to the park (located near Allerton).

- Breen Prairie Farm: Volunteers should meet at 10 a.m. at this dry, limestone prairie farm near Monticello. Look for event signs on west side of the road. Water and snacks will be provided.
- Springbrook Conservation Education Center: Volunteers should meet at 9 a.m. at the Education Center's parking lot (473 160th Road, Guthrie Center).
- Vincent Bluffs Preserve: Volunteers should meet at 10 a.m. at the intersection of Woodbury Ave. and Harry Langdon Blvd., in Council Bluffs. This 31-acre urban prairie overlooks the Missouri River valley from a Loess Hill bluff. Activities will include a guided nature hike and possible trash cleanup.
- Waterman Prairie Area: Volunteers should meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 10 and Wilson Ave. (near Petersen). Participants will be involved in the active management of the prairie.

The event on April 24 will occur at Rochester Cemetery in Cedar County. Volunteers should meet at 10 a.m. and will remove invasive garlic mustard. Directions to this and all other Prairie Rescue 2005 events are available at www.inhf.org/prairierescue2005.html.

These events are part of a wider effort to preserve the dwindling Iowa prairie. Native grasslands once covered 70-percent of the state, but have been reduced to 0.1-percent of their original size. The remnants, scattered in small patches throughout Iowa, now require the assistance of natural resources staff and volunteers to survive.

Prairie Rescue 2005 invites volunteers to reconnect with Iowa's prairie roots, and help save this beautiful habitat before it is lost forever. Roughly 25 events will occur across the state throughout April and May. Sponsors include the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and other natural resources groups.

Individuals, families and organizations are all invited to participate. Volunteers should dress for the weather (pants and long-sleeves are recommended) and consider bringing a hat, sunscreen, and water. Volunteers should also bring gloves, tools, and lunches (unless otherwise noted.)

For more information about each event, contact the following people:

- **Ames High:** ERV KLAAS at (515) 233-3327 or at eklaas@iastate.edu or LAURA NORIAN at (515) 244-5044 or at laura.norian@tnc.org.
- **Bobwhite:** BRANT SCHMELL at (641) 898-7534 or at bschmell@iowatelecom.net.
- **Breen:** CATHY ENGSTROM or JOE MCGOVERN at (515) 288-1846 or 800-475-1846.

- Springbrook: DAVE MESSINGER at (641) 747-8383, ext. 16 or at Dave.Messinger@dnr.state.ia.us.
- Vincent Bluffs: TERRY OSWALD at (712) 310-7423 or at terry-oswald@att.net.
- Waterman Prairie: KATHY KOSKOVICH at (712) 943-8297 or at 712-330-6932 or at Katherine.Koskovich@dnr.state.ia.us.
- Rochester Cemetery: CASEY J. KOHRT at (319) 530-0585 or at cjkohrt@hotmail.com or PETE KOLLASCH at (319) 358-9458 or at pkollasch@igsb.uiowa.edu.

For more information about Statewide Prairie Rescue 2005 contact KATIE KEMP at (515) 281-3134 or Katie.Kemp@dnr.state.ia.us or CATHY ENGSTROM at (515) 288-1846 or at cengstrom@inhf.org.

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[Hold until April 14]

NORTHERN PIKE SPAWN

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The run is done. Hatchery workers now baby sit 1.6 million northern pike eggs; shipping them across Iowa and to Wisconsin. Stocked in streams and lakes, they eventually reach the size you and I hope to take home.

Early each spring, sometimes even late winter, big northern pikes swim into the shallows of the Mississippi River to spawn. At Guttenberg, crews are ready for them. Long hoop nets stretch out from the banks into those shallows. The soon-to-be-brood fish follow the lead into the nets, where workers bring them on board for a short trip back to the hatchery. There, they softly, firmly, squeeze the undersides of the 'ripe' fish to release the eggs or sperm they hold. Mixing the two components, they fertilize the eggs. The incubating eggs are then kept under cold, running water for 12 days, to hatch.

From there, it's time to see the world. Or at least the lakes and rivers of Iowa. "In most situations, northern pikes caught in Iowa come from this hatchery," explains Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologist Scott Gritters. "We don't see a lot of natural reproduction in our lakes and rivers. Northern pikes need backwater areas for spawning. A lot of those areas have been lost. We basically raise the fish (that will eventually be caught on interior lakes and streams)."

Most eggs that hatch are stocked as day or two old pinhead-sized 'fry'. A growing number, though, are being raised up to fingerlings. "Survival of fry is hard to evaluate. It can be 'hit or miss' from year to year; depending on weather, predation and other factors," notes Gritters. "We have had real good luck with fingerlings." This spring, Guttenberg is also shipping 600,000 fry upstream to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service hatchery at Genoa, Wis. In some years, another batch goes to the DNR's Spirit

Lake hatchery. This spring, however, Spirit Lake crews filled their own order. “We raise them on a dry diet up to two to three inches,” says hatchery manager Donna Muhm. “Then, by the end of May, early June, they are out of here. We have requests for 140,000 fingerlings from about 30 locations.”

Each year, the weather and the river render their own rules. Gritters and fisheries technician Kevin Hansen monitor the river; watching for backwater temperatures to crack 40 degrees. When the brood fish start moving in, the calls go out to other DNR fisheries stations. Crews go from ‘stand by’ to ‘alert,’ lending a collective hand for a few days of heavy duty.

On the day I went out with them, each of nine nets in the flooded backwaters of Goetz Lake—below Guttenberg—held from one to a half dozen northerns. “We look for submerged vegetation. Northern pike lay their eggs on top of aquatic vegetation. We try to intercept the fish before they spawn,” explains biologist Bill Kalishek, on loan from Decorah. Also in those nets was a wide sampling of other Mississippi River species. Several yellow perch were already secreting their eggs, too. A couple three-pound walleyes would be next. Catfish, crappies, drum, buffalo, carp (including a 20-pounder at one stop!) and a short-nosed gar also greeted Kalishek, Van Sterner and Adam Thiese as they hoisted the heavy, fish-filled hoop nets on board.

“We have a good number of fish ready to spawn, so we’re taking them back to the hatchery,” relays Kalishek. Anticipating that days’ ripe females would put them over quota, they released those that were still ‘green’ and the males. The next day, crews pulled the nets. Though intensive work, the long days in cold water pay off. With the second highest ‘take’ in 31 years at Guttenberg, more than 350 females and more than 300 males were netted this spring, producing more than 24 *liters* of eggs, and reaching that 1.6 million egg target.

These days, chances are that northern you hook came from the Mississippi River, even though you are nowhere near it. If you do head to the Big Water, fishing for the sleek, heavy-bodied northerns turns on *right now*. “The bite should really be on for the next few days,” forecasts Gritters. “They will be near those shallows yet. Anything flashy that you throw toward them should work. They are aggressive and fierce fighters when they hit your spinner bait. They are the ultimate predator in Iowa waters.”

Gritters admits he is surprised that more anglers don’t go after post-spawn northerns.

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